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Ministry proposal on FT water management

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THE Works Ministry will submit its proposal on Federal Territory water supply management to the Cabinet soon, after it has been referred to other related ministries.

Its minister Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu said the ministry will also approach the Treasury for allocations to carry out the pipelink project from the Sungai Gombak for the supply of water to Wangsa Maju residents.

"I have spoken to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad that we need money and Dr Mahathir was in agreement," he said, adding that he will be discussing the matter with the Finance Minister as directed.

He said that the first project to be carried out will be the Gombak one as soon as an allocation is made. He, however, declined to reveal the amount of money he will request for the project.

The minister said although water supply is under the jurisdiction of the Selangor State Government, the Federal Government has to intervene as it is responsible for it in the Federal Territory.

"Although we still buy water from Selangor, we want to carry out a complete reticulation exercise within the Federal Territory which needs urgent attention as loss of water here is now 40 per cent," he said.

Water can be saved if the management of water supply in the Federal Territory is separated from that of Selangor's, he added.

Bernama reports: The Federation of Malaysian Consumer Associations (Fomca) yesterday called for the amendment of the federal constitution to bring water under the Federal Government's jurisdiction.

"If sewerage services can be made a national matter, why not do it for water also," its secretary-general N. Marimuthu said in a statement yesterday.

He said a mechanism could be worked out to compensate states for losing their water revenue.

He said Fomca supported the government's decision to establish the National Water Council but cautioned that without the appropriate power and authority, the council will merely be a "toothless tiger" at the mercy of state governments.

He also said the Federal Government should immediately intervene and review all state water privatization plans as it might lead to a new form of what he described as "economic imperialism."

Marimuthu said Fomca was fully aware of the sensitivities in the privatization of water supply as it was a state matter and a source of revenue.

He said a random survey by Fomca revealed that Malaysians bidding for water privatization projects had foreign partners and this joint venture arrangements came in many forms.

Some foreign companies made arrangements with their local counterparts to take over the operations and maintenance (O&M) aspects while others become the managing contractor to the local company, he said.

"Fomca is concerned with this situation. If local firms are not able to handle the O&M aspects, then they are virtually at the mercy of their foreign counterparts. Hence, leading to a new kind of economic imperialism.

"Our water sources will be in the hands of profit-oriented foreign companies which do not share our national interests. We must not allow this to happen," he added.

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